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BOOK REVIEWS

IN CHARGE OF

M. E. CAMERON



HAPPINESS. ESSAYS ON THE MEANING OF LIFE. By Carl Hilty. The Macmillan Co., New York.

Among the books of the year worth reading—although, alas for popular taste! we do not find it in the list with those that have had phenomenal sales—is Professor Carl Hilty's "Happiness," translated into English by Francis Peabody, professor of Christian morals, Harvard University.

Mr. Peabody in his preface commends the book to those who are perplexed to know what to make of the facts of life, and to those who demand an interpretation of the conditions existing in the world, where "the art of life is lost in the pace of living." He apologizes for liberties which he found necessary to take in translation—"sifting of phrases" and "rupture of German sentences." To the reader the apology seems quite unnecessary, for all through the book one has the feeling of listening to the very utterance of the author, and the usual sense of loss due to translation is, happily, quite wanting. The essays, seven in all, might well be taken for a rule of life. If it seems a long rule,—a hundred and forty-nine pages,—read it and see what you may dare to leave out. If you really desire happiness, you must honestly accept the entire formula.

Mr. Peabody says of the essays, "They are the 'Meditations' of Marcus Aurelius, told in the language of modern life; the 'Imitation of Christ,' expressed with the academic reserve of a modern gentleman." After you have read them you feel that Mr. Peabody was over moderate in his praise. The first essay, on the "Art of Work," makes short work of our various excuses for not doing more and better work, and confronts us with the accusation of laziness, which the author declares is the original sin. He does not leave us without the remedy, and after a glance at his own production we conclude that he knows practically whereof he speaks.

"Life is not given man to enjoy, but, so far as may be, to use effectively. One who does not recognize this has already lost his spiritual health. Indeed, it is not possible for him to retain even his physical health as he might under conditions of natural activity and reasonable ways of living."

In the second essay, "How to Fight the Battle of Life," he quotes largely from the Russian General von Klinger, and as in the first essay we are told that we cannot attain to the blessedness of rest without first honestly working until we know fatigue, so this second one introduces a paradox: he who "would overcome the world, must give up thinking of what people call happiness, and must with all his might, without indirectness, or fear, or self-seeking, simply do his duty." "'Most men of principle need not succeed. Success is necessary only to schemers.' Real success in life, then, the attainment of the highest human perfection and of true and fruitful activity, necessarily and repeatedly involves outward failure."

The third essay, "Good Habits," insists on the necessity of positive action rather than negative, as acquiring fearlessness rather than conquering cowardice,

etc. "It is much easier in the inner life, as in the outer, to attack positively than to repel defensively." And "at any cost, and even for the sake of one's own soul, one must make it his habit to cultivate love for others, not first of all inquiring whether they deserve that love or not—a question which is often too hard to answer." "One who loves is always, though unconsciously, wiser than one who does not."

The essay on the "Art of Saving Time" is very practical. "The best way of all to have time is to have the habit of regular work, not to work by fits and starts, but in the definite hours of the day,—though not of the night,—and to work six days in the week, not five and not seven. To turn night into day or Sunday into a workday is the best way to have neither time nor capacity for work." "The true spirit of work, which has no time for the superfluities, but time enough for what is right and true, grows best in the soil of that philosophy which sees one's work extending into the infinite world, and one's life on earth as but one part of life itself. Then one gets strength to do his highest tasks, and patience among the grave difficulties and hinderances which confront him both within himself and in the times in which he lives."

In the sixth essay, "Happiness," while warning us against that pessimism that bids us believe that everything and everyone, ourselves included, are bad, he yet in the most uncompromising manner shows us that those things which we consider good will not bring us happiness. All the wealth in the world, if it were ours, could we not share it with our brother, could not and ought not make us happy while he lacked part of it. Virtue fails, for "virtue in its completeness dwells in no human heart." Duty? "If one of my readers says to me, 'I am the man who has thus done his duty,'—well, he may be quite right, but I do not care for that man's nearer acquaintance." Philanthropy? He bids us remember how the Apostle says that it is possible to speak with the tongues of angels, to give all one's goods to feed the poor, and even one's body to be burned, and yet not have love. Work? He notes that the greatest concern of working people is to shorten the hours of work—which, of course, they would not do if work bring happiness. "The first and most essential condition of true happiness, I answer, is a firm faith in the moral order of the world. If one lack this, if it be held that the world is governed by chance or by those changeless laws of nature which in their dealings with the weak are merciless, or if, finally, one imagine the world controlled by the cunning and power of man, then there is no hope for personal happiness. In such an order of the world there is nothing left for the individual but to rule or to be ruled—to be either the anvil or the hammer; and it is hard to say which of the two would be to an honorable man the more unworthy lot." To faith in the moral order of the world he adds work done in the same faith, and, finally, *suffering*. "That word of the Apostle Paul, 'We glory in tribulations,' is, like many of his sayings, absolutely unintelligible to anyone who has not experienced what renewal of power may be discovered through misfortune itself. It is a form of happiness which one never forgets if he has once really experienced it."

The seventh essay, "The Meaning of Life," I leave, as I do the fourth, without comment of mine, feeling sure you will not skip either one. The whole book is uplifting, quieting, and steadying. It should have many readers among nurses and is certain to prove acceptable for reading aloud. No one essay is long enough to be tiring, and it is very sure to be just the stimulation and encouragement needed by those who shrink from taking up the battle of life again after a long and exhausting illness.